



## **The Garden Club of New Haven**

*Promoting the preservation of natural resources is one of the primary missions of The Garden Club of New Haven (GCNH), and of the organizations with which is affiliated, the Federated Garden Club of Connecticut and the Garden Club of America. Since 2011, GCNH has actively participated in educating the public about issues involving trees and power and advocating for a balanced approach to preserving the benefits of trees and protecting public safety, including power reliability.*

**Written Testimony to the Energy and Technology Committee  
In Support of the General Intent of Raised H.B. No. 5116 and in  
Opposition to Subsection 1(e)**

**Submitted by Mary-Michelle (Mikey) Hirschhoff**

Spokesperson on Trees and Power for  
The Garden Club of New Haven

To: Co-Chairs Senator Needleman and Representative Arconti  
Co-Vice Chairs Senator Winfield and Representative Allie-Brennan  
Ranking Members Senator Formica and Representative Ferraro and  
Members of the Energy and Technology Committee

The Garden Club of New Haven supports H.B. 5116's apparent intent to remedy the harm done to municipal street and roadside tree canopies in the public right-of-way by electric distribution company (EDC) tree removal and pruning. However, the focus should be on replanting trees where they have been removed in order to retain some part of the benefits they have provided, especially given the impacts of climate change. The primary climate change benefits include not only carbon capture, but climate adaptation and resilience -- reducing the stress of heat by providing shade, lowering cooling and heating bills by reducing demand, absorbing stormwater and reducing flooding, and improving air quality by removing pollutants.<sup>1</sup>

To that end, Subsection 1 (e), which prohibits such replanting, should be deleted. Language should be substituted that requires stump removal or grinding by the EDC and replanting where trees have been removed. Replanting should occur only with the approval and under the supervision of the tree warden or equivalent municipal official, and should be an obligation of the EDC when removing a tree, thus avoiding the administrative costs of an application process.<sup>2</sup> Short stature at maturity trees should be planted within the

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<sup>1</sup>Other benefits include increased property values, increased business income, protection of street pavement, improved mental and physical health, noise reduction, safer communities and traffic calming (reduction in traffic speed).

<sup>2</sup> Municipalities should not have to apply to the EDCs for funds that compensate them for the lost benefits of the street/roadside canopy due to EDC tree removal. Municipal control over the public right-of-way should not be so diminished.

clearance zone to avoid tree/wire conflict from the overhead pole and wire distribution system. Large stature at maturity trees should be planted in the public right-of-way on the other side of the street or road. As an alternative in appropriate circumstances, replacement could be fulfilled by planting on private land within ten feet of the boundary for the public right-of-way, in accordance with the requirements set forth in Section 23-60, C.G.S.<sup>3</sup>.

Because trees of short mature stature will not provide the full extent of benefits that removed healthy large stature trees have provided, we would also support funding of a separate program to plant trees within street/roadside public rights-of-ways where there is inadequate tree canopy, with priority to planting trees of large stature where they can grow to maturity.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary-Michelle (Mikey) Hirschhoff  
Spokesperson on Trees and Power  
The Garden Club of New Haven  
P. O. Box 6197  
Hamden, CT 06517  
[www.gardenclubofnewhaven.org](http://www.gardenclubofnewhaven.org)

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<sup>3</sup> Sec. 23-60, C.G.S. provides "Each town, city or borough may appropriate annually a suitable sum to be expended by the town tree warden, borough tree warden, city forester or other similar officer, in the planting, trimming, spraying, care and preservation of shrubs or ornamental or shade trees within the limits of any public highway or grounds under his control and, at the discretion of the tree warden or other similar officer and with the written consent of the owner thereof, upon land adjoining such highway or grounds, if not more than ten feet therefrom, for the purpose of shading or ornamenting such highway or grounds. All shrubs and trees planted under the provisions of this section shall be deemed public shrubs and trees and shall be under the care and control of the tree warden, city forester or other similar officer and may be removed only upon a written permit from him." [Emphasis added.]